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REAT BRITAIN'S MEASURES GAINST GERMAN TRADE.

A SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

The Rt. Hon. Sir E. GREY,

Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON THE

26th January, 1916.

(Published by Authority.)



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London. New York. Toronto.



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THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS (SIR EDWARD GREY) : The Right Hon. Gentleman who has just spoken (Mr. Leverton Harris) has made a most interesting speech, full of knowledge, and founded upon personal experience. The Right Hon. Gentleman is one of those, of whom there are several in the House and many outside, who have been giving most devoted service on committees in carrying out the policy of the Government with regard to contraband. There have been from the beginning of the War a number of people of great knowledge and experience who have given their services voluntarily on these various committees, and whose services have been of enormous value.

I think the House will have gathered from the Right Hon. Gentleman's speech that the subject with which we are dealing is not really so simple, and cannot be made so simple, as might appear from some of the speeches that are made upon it and some of the articles which appear outside. It is a most difficult and complicated subject. I gather from the Debate, as far as it has gone, that there is real misapprehension in the House as to what is the present state of things with regard to the amount of trade passing through neutral countries to the enemy, and also real misapprehension, and a vast underestimate, of what the Government is doing through its various agencies to prevent that trade. In the first place, I must deal with some of the figures scattered broadcast lately in some organs of the Press, which have created a grotesque and quite untrue impression of the amount of leakage through neutral countries—figures which will not bear examination, but the conclusions founded upon which have undoubtedly done great harm. The figures consist, as far as I have seen them, of statistics from the official returns of the United States giving the amount of exports to certain neutral countries in Europe in a normal year of peace. Figures are then given which purport to be the excess figure for those same neutral countries

at the present time, these figures being greatly in excess of the peace figures. The peace figures are then subtracted from the figures of last year, and the conclusion is drawn that the whole of that surplus has gone to Germany. On that are founded various attacks upon the Government. These figures published in this way, do a great injustice—or rather attacks founded upon these figures do a great injustice—to the Government. The figures take no account of the fact that in the case of many of these articles in time of peace neutral countries do not draw the whole of their supplies from the United States. They draw them from enemy countries, or from sources which are not available to them in time of war. Therefore, to take the exports from the United States into these countries, and to assume that, because these exports have risen therefore the large surplus which has been imported into neutral countries has gone into enemy countries, entirely leaves out of account the fact that in very many cases the increased exports from the United States have been for real consumption in those neutral countries, and have taken the place of the supplies which in peace time have been drawn from other sources than the United States, and are not now available.

In the next place, the figures of exports from

the United States give the amount of stuff which left the ports of the United States. These do not necessarily correspond with the amount of stuff which arrives in the neutral ports. What is the cause of all the trouble and the very great friction that there has been with the meat-packers of the United States? It is because a large amount of the produce coming from the United States consigned to neutral ports, which we believed was destined for the enemy, never reached the neutral ports. It is in the Prize Court here. So at one and the same time the Foreign Office, or the Government is having a very warm contention indeed with neutral Governments, or groups of people in neutral countries, on the ground that we have put their produce into the Prize Court here and detained it and at the same time we are being attacked in this country on the ground that that very same produce has gone through neutral countries into the enemy countries! Some figures have been published in the Press to-day giving a very different impression of the true state of the case as regards the neutral countries and the enemy—figures published by the War Trade Department. I recommend that those figures should be studied, for they, at any rate, reduce the thing to very different proportion.

But I have had some other figures supplied to me, out of which I am going to take two striking instances. The statement has been made in one organ of the Press, in regard to wheat, that the exports of wheat from the United States to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands collectively, rose from 19,000,000 bushels in the first ten months of 1913—that is, the year of peace—to 50,000,000 bushels in the corresponding period of 1915—that is to say, an excess of 31,000,000 bushels. The conclusion is drawn that that has all gone to the enemy through those neutral countries. It is almost incredible, if the figures supplied to me are reliable—and I believe they are—that a statement of that kind should have been made. Those 50,000,000 bushels from the United States are the figures given under a collective heading in the United States Returns, which comprises, not merely these four Scandinavian countries, but “other Europe,” including Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Malta; so that these 50,000,000 bushels not only go to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland, but also include the exports to Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Malta. The exports to Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Malta alone amounted to 23,000,000 bushels. That is a very large part of the whole increase. Why do these countries take so

much? Because no doubt they depended, I presume, in ordinary years, very largely on grain coming from Black Sea ports which has ceased to be available. Therefore there is no need to assume that Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Malta were importing wheat in order to pass on to the enemy; they wanted it to supply the grain which they would have got in normal years from other sources.

From the figures that remain some millions more bushels must be deducted which have been allowed to go through under special international arrangements to the Belgian Relief Fund. When you have deducted those you find that these four countries—the three Scandinavian countries and Holland—which were supposed to have sent 31,000,000 bushels on to the enemy, had not, as a matter of fact, imported at all in excess of their normal requirements, and there is no reason to suppose that any of these bushels got to the enemy. Then I take the figures quoted in the Press for wheat-flour. The figures quoted suggest an increase in the exports of wheat-flour from the United States to Holland and the three Scandinavian countries in the first ten months of 1915, over the corresponding period of 1913, of 3,700,000 barrels; the assumption again being that that had all gone to the enemy. This increase includes

not merely what went to those four countries, but also includes an increase to France of 1,400,000 barrels, and to Italy of 250,000 barrels. In addition, there was something over 1,000,000 allowed to go through to the Belgian Relief Fund, making, with the increase to France and to Italy, a total of 3,000,000 barrels. Out of, therefore, 3,700,000 barrels supposed to have gone to the enemy there is accounted for 3,000,000 barrels. The actual increase to the three Scandinavian countries is, therefore, reduced from 3,700,000 barrels to only 650,000 barrels. In view of the deficiency of the whole production of wheat in Scandinavia in 1914, this increase, according to the information supplied to me, cannot be regarded as excessive. That puts the thing in a very different light.

Leakage, of course, through neutral countries there has been, and will be. Whatever you do, if you adopt every suggestion made in this House, you cannot prevent some leakage. You cannot take over the administration of neutral countries. You cannot prevent smuggling taking place even against the regulations of the neutral countries themselves. It is not in our power to do that under whatever system you have, whether you call it blockade, or whatever name you give to it. You have still to let through to neutral countries

the things which they really require for their own consumption. You have, therefore, to distinguish between the things which they need for their own consumption and the things which they import with a view to their being passed on to the enemy. You have to make that distinction. Nobody could have listened to the speech of my Right Hon. Friend the Member for East Worcestershire (Mr. Harris) without realising how impossible it is to do that perfectly. You have every sort of ingenuity brought to bear to make it difficult for you to distinguish—to make it absolutely impossible, whatever the Navy may do, whatever strict provision there may be, to make sure that in no case will a cargo, or part of a cargo which is apparently destined for consumption in a neutral country, but really is destined for the enemy, go through to that neutral country. Some leakage there will always be. We have been anxious about that leakage. We have done what we can to get real information as to what is going on. The other day Lord Faringdon, who a short time ago was well known in this House as Sir Alexander Henderson, went over to make inquiries on the spot. He is, at least, as well qualified by ability, knowledge and experience to ascertain the facts as anyone who could be sent on behalf of any unofficial agency. He has produced a report.

That report does not say that there is no leakage, but I think, on the whole, it is a very satisfactory report. In my opinion it shows that the amount of leakage in the trade passing from overseas through these neutral countries to the enemy is, considering all the facts of the case, much less than might have been supposed. The general tendency of the report is to show that the maximum which can be done is being done without serious trouble with neutral countries, founded upon the idea that you are really interfering with their supplies.

SIR H. DALZIEL : Can we see that report?

SIR E. GREY : No, the report cannot be published. You cannot make these inquiries and publish the information obtained without its being known to the enemy. If it is known to the enemy your power of getting further information, and of watching what is going on—the actual facts even of what is going on is useful to the enemy—will be diminished. I do not, however, see any objection to the report being shown in a way in which knowledge of it cannot get to the enemy. There is nothing in the report to conceal from people who are looking at the matter, and examining it from the point of view from which the House is examining it this afternoon. All that there is to be concealed

is from the opposite point of view—that is, the enemy point of view.

I pass from those figures to another charge which is made, not, I understand, in the Debate here, not in all the Press, but in some organs of the Press, and by some persons outside, in a most offensive form, which is grossly unfair and untrue. It is that the Navy is doing its utmost to prohibit goods reaching the enemy, and that the Foreign Office is spoiling the work of the Navy. When ships are brought in by the Navy to a port with goods destined for the enemy, the Foreign Office, it is alleged, orders those ships to be released, and undoes the work which the Navy is doing. I must give the House an account of what is exactly the machinery. I do not say that in the first three months of the War, before we had got our organisation complete, there was not a certain amount of confusion and overlapping, and that things were so well done as now. I will take the whole of last year up to the present date. What is the procedure? One of the ships under the Admiralty brings into port a neutral merchant vessel carrying a cargo which the naval officers think may be destined for the enemy. They have no adequate means of searching that cargo on the high seas; it has to be done in port. Until you have got that vessel in port you cannot really

form an opinion of what is the probable destination of the cargo. The ship is brought into port by the Navy. If that ship turns out to have goods destined not merely for a neutral port, but for *bonâ fide* consumption of a neutral country, without which that country would be starved of some supplies which it has every right to have, that cargo obviously ought to be released, and not put in the Prize Court at all. If, on the other hand, there is reason to suppose that that cargo is not destined for *bonâ-fide* neutral use, then undoubtedly it ought to be put in the Prize Court. That is settled by the Contraband Committee.

The Contraband Committee is presided over at present by the Hon. and Learned Member for Leamington (Mr. Pollock), who, again, is one of those giving invaluable service to the State. Before he undertook the chairmanship it was presided over by my Right Hon. and Learned Friend who is now the Solicitor-General, who, of course, had to give up that position when he became Solicitor-General, because it was impossible to combine it with his official work. How is the Committee composed? Besides the Chairman, it is composed of one representative of the Foreign Office, one who represents the Board of Trade and Customs combined, and two representatives of the Admiralty, and that Com-

mittee, which has acquired very great experience in the course of its work, settles the question of whether the ship, or any part of the cargo in the ship, ought to be put in the Prize Court, or whether it ought to be released and go forward. I believe that Committee has done its work admirably, and that neither the country nor the Navy has any reason but to be exceedingly grateful for the knowledge and ability it has shown and the pains it has taken. Can the decision of that Committee be interfered with? Of course it can be interfered with. The Government can in any case say if such-and-such a ship, which the Committee thinks ought to be detained ought for special reasons to be released. I have made what inquiry I can, and, in accordance with my own recollection, I think in the last year there have been three cases when ships have been dealt with or undertakings about ships have been given without consulting the Committee. Two of those ships were cases of ships which were released and sent back. Those two cases were discussed twice by the Cabinet, and those two particular ships were released for special reasons. The third case is that of a ship which was brought into port the other day—the “Stockholm,” a Swedish vessel. It is a ship to which the Swedish people attach great importance. It

is, I believe, the first ship of a new line, a passenger vessel. The detention of it must cause great inconvenience, but it had on board a cargo which, I understand, the Contraband Committee had reason to suppose—I think rightly—was not all destined for use in Sweden, and might be sent on to the enemy. Anyhow, the detention of the vessel caused great inconvenience, and a special appeal was made from the Swedish Government in regard to that particular vessel, and with regard to one part of the cargo a special assurance was given. Of course these things have to be done rapidly if they are to be done at all. If you are to release a vessel, and wish to avoid inconvenience, you must release it quickly; and, after consulting the Prime Minister and the First Lord of the Admiralty, I sent a telegram to Stockholm saying that if we could receive assurances from the Swedish Government that the cargo, which seemed to us suspect, was destined for *bonâ-fide* use in Sweden, and that none of it would go on to the enemy, or set free an equivalent amount of corresponding material to go on to the enemy, the ship, in order to avoid inconvenience, was to be released at once. That undertaking was given without consulting the Contraband Committee. I am sorry to say, as far as I am concerned, we have not received an assurance, and,

therefore, no action has been taken. That is the sort of case in which, unless you are to forfeit entirely the goodwill of neutrals, unless you are to take what I consider an unduly high-handed and provocative action, you ought to say to a neutral country which makes a special case of inconvenience caused in regard to a ship, "Give us assurances with regard to that cargo, and, rather than cause that inconvenience, we will be prepared to release the ship." That, I believe, represents the extent of interference with the Contraband Committee with regard to the release of ships in the last twelve months.

Now I would ask, really, is it not time after that that these reckless figures and these reckless statements should not be made with regard to the action of the Foreign Office or any Department of the Government? What, is it supposed, is the effect upon the Navy of making charges of that sort?

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY (MR. BALFOUR) : Hear hear !

SIR E. GREY : If the charges made were true, and I was a naval officer, I should want to shoot the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. But that is not the thing that matters. The thing that matters is the dispiriting effect it has on our seamen. There never was a time in the whole history of this country when we—and when I

say "we," I mean our Allies, too—have owed a greater tribute of gratitude and admiration to the Navy than for the work done during this War. To those of us who have to bear the brunt of much work, and face much difficulty, the knowledge of the efficiency, the courage, the spirit and the patriotism which animate the whole Navy is an upholding and a supporting thought, and there ought not to be statements of that kind, entirely unfounded as they are, put about, leading the Navy to suppose that the work which they are doing for the country, or any part of their work, is being undone by the Government, or any Department of the Government.

The task of the Foreign Office in this matter is a much more complicated one and much more burdensome than people know. The Foreign Office is not burdened as a Department with deciding about the release of particular ships. That, as I have shown, if it is not done by the Contraband Committee, is done by the Cabinet, or, in a very special case, by Ministers; but it is not done departmentally now. What is the work the Foreign Office has to do? The Foreign Office has to do its best to retain the goodwill of the neutrals. Now, supposing you know at the Foreign Office that the War Office, the Admiralty, the Ministry of

Munitions, and perhaps one or more of our Allies are specially anxious that you should maintain open communication with some particular neutral country for strategical reasons, or for the sake of supplies which you get from them. We are constantly being told that certain supplies which come from abroad are absolutely essential for the Ministry of Munitions. The Board of Trade know that certain other supplies from abroad are absolutely necessary to carry on the industries of this country. The business of the Foreign Office is to keep the diplomatic relations such that there is no fear of these supplies being interfered with, and we have got at the same time to defend, to explain, and to justify to neutral countries all the interference that has taken place with trade destined for the enemy, which cannot be done without some direct or indirect interference also with neutral countries. That is not an easy matter. It is one in which the Foreign Office is constantly engaged, and I think the House must recognise, when Members are pressing, as they are quite right in pressing, this question of supplies to the enemy, and saying, quite rightly, that the interests of this country come first that you must also be very careful that you do not unduly or wrongfully interfere with the rights of neutrals to get supplies which are

necessary for their own consumption. You have no right to make neutrals suffer. I would like to consider—and it is rather germane to the case—what more can be done than is being done consistently with the rights of neutrals and also with effect? The Hon. Member who moved this Motion sketched out what he thought ought to be done, and I think the Hon. Member who seconded the Motion agreed with him. The suggestion was that there should be three lines of blockade, one extending to the coast of Norway, one across the Channel, and one across the Straits of Gibraltar. If you establish those lines of blockade you must do it consistently with the rights of neutrals. You cannot establish those lines of blockade and say that no ships shall go through them at all, or you will stop all traffic of every kind to the neutral ports inside. You would stop all traffic to Christiania, Stockholm, Rotterdam, Copenhagen—all traffic whatever. Well, of course, that is not consistent with the rights of neutrals. You cannot shut off all supplies to neutral countries. You must not try to make the grass grow in the streets of neutral ports. You must let through those lines vessels *bonâ-fide* destined for the neutral ports with *bonâ-fide* cargoes. Nor can you put every cargo in your Prize Court, and say it is not to go on

to a neutral port until the Prize Court has examined it. The congestion in this country would be such that you could not deal with it if you did that, and you have no right to say that the British Prize Court is to be the neck of the bottle through which all trade has to pass. If we had gone, or attempted to go, as far as that, I think the War possibly might have been over by now, but it would have been over because the whole world would have risen against us, and we, and our Allies too, would have collapsed under the general resentment of the whole world. If you establish those lines, then the ship to neutral ports with a *bonâ-fide* neutral cargo must be allowed to go through. Therefore, what I understand is meant when you say blockade is that you are going to discriminate, and not stop everything that is going through your lines, but only stop what is destined to the enemy and let go through what is for neutrals. That is what is being done at the present time, and that is actually the action of the Admiralty to-day. The ships when brought in are dealt with by the method which I have described, and no ships are going through to German ports at all. Therefore that is actually being done. We are, as I think one Hon. Member said, filtering the trade which passes through with the object of stopping all the enemy trade. We are stop-

ping the trade coming out, and we are also stopping the imports; more than that you cannot do. You cannot do more than stop all imports into the enemy country and all exports coming out.

We are applying the doctrine of continuous voyage, and it is being applied now. On what other ground are goods to neutral ports held up but on the ground of continuous voyage? Do not let it be supposed by adopting the actual proposal made this afternoon we are going to prevent goods reaching Germany more effectively than at the present time, except in one respect. If you had established the old technical blockade you would no doubt have been entitled to confiscate more largely ships and goods than at the present time. While you stop now and detain them, and do not let the goods go through, you do not confiscate as largely as you would if you had had the old technical blockade. One of the reasons why this change is recommended is that it is going to be more palatable to the neutrals, but you are not going to make it more palatable by making the penalties more severe. What we want to do is to prevent goods reaching or coming from the enemy country, and that is what we are doing. We want to do it, and we believe that under the Order in Council it is being done. Do not let it

be supposed that the Order in Council does something special either to validate or invalidate. The Mover of this Motion spoke as if an Order in Council was one thing and a blockade was another. What would have happened if we had adopted his plan would be that we should simply substitute one Order in Council for the present one. The blockade would be established by the Order in Council. An Order in Council does not make a thing good or bad. It is merely our way under our form of Constitution of announcing to the world what we are doing.

MR. S. BENN: Will the Right Hon. Gentleman deal with the point that the Allied nations should declare the blockade, rather than England by an Order in Council?

SIR E. GREY: That is a very pertinent question, but it again shows a misapprehension. If we all declared a blockade the French Government would declare a blockade in their own way, according to their Constitution, and we should declare it in our way. What is happening at the present moment, to carry out the policy of last March, is that certain instructions are issued to the British Navy. The French Government issued precisely the same instructions to their Navy, and so, if we and the Allied nations declared a blockade they would issue

their own Proclamation of a blockade, and we should issue ours. That is the way it would be done, precisely the same as now. The French have issued exactly the same Proclamation on their behalf as we have in regard to our Proclamation of March. The only thing is that you have under the British Constitution to call it an Order in Council, although other people may call it whatever they please. You would not have any change in that respect. I quite agree that you want common action with your Allies, and that is precisely what we have been having ever since last March with the French Government. If anyone wishes to realise the justification for our present policy they have only got to read the correspondence which has been published with the United States already. If they wish to read the objections taken to it, and the objections which any sort of policy might lead to, they can read the Notes from the United States Government to this country, especially the last Note which has been published, and which has not yet been answered.

We are going to answer the last Note of the United States Government, but we are considering the whole question, and we are going to do it in consultation, in the first instance, with the French Government who are concerned in this matter. That consultation is taking place

at the present time with a view to pursuing not merely the same policy, but justifying it with the same arguments, and putting the same case before the world. We may also consider it, perhaps with some of the other Allies, who may have to be actively concerned in carrying out the policy. At present we are in consultation with the French Government on the subject. I can only say, with regard to neutrals, that we are perfectly ready to examine any method of carrying out the policy of last March, that is what we believe is the belligerent right of stopping enemy trade, either to or from. We are ready to examine any other method of carrying that out, than the one we are now adopting, which we are convinced will be effective, and which in form is likely to be more agreeable to neutrals, or in practice less inconvenient to them, so long as it will be effective. But do not let us hastily adopt changes of form unless we are quite sure that they are not going to impair the effectiveness of what we are doing, and that they are not going to involve us in legal difficulties more complicated than those which at present exist.

I must say to the House that at the present moment one of the greatest concerns of the Government is to explain and justify to neutrals what we are doing to avoid friction with them,

and to get such agreements, not with their Governments, but with the various people interested in trade, as will make it easy to distinguish between goods destined for the neutrals, and goods intended for the enemy. I said just now that we have not any right to make neutrals suffer. By that I mean that you have no right to deprive neutrals of goods which are genuinely intended for their own use. Inconvenience it is impossible to avoid, and you cannot help it. What I would say to neutrals is this :—We cannot give up this right to interfere with enemy trade; that we must maintain and that we must press. We know, and it has always been admitted, that you cannot exercise that right without in some cases considerable inconvenience to neutrals—delay to their trade, and in some cases mistakes which it is impossible to avoid. What I would say to neutrals is this : There is one main question to be answered by them. Do they admit our right to apply the principles which were applied by the American Government in the War between North and South? Do they admit our right to apply those principles to modern conditions and, to do our best to prevent trade with the enemy through neutral countries? If they say “ Yes,” as they are bound in fairness to say, then I would say to them, “ Do let chambers of commerce, or

whatever it may be in neutral countries, do their best to make it easy for us to distinguish." Take the case of the "Stockholm," the Swedish ship, the other day. When it was pointed out what great inconvenience we were causing by detaining that ship it was also suggested that in order to avoid detention in future there should be some understanding or some means of making it sure to us that the cargo was *bonâ fide* a Swedish cargo and not going to the enemy. That is the sort of thing we welcome.

What we ask of them, as we cannot avoid causing inconvenience and in some cases loss, is that they will help us to distinguish by making the distinction *bonâ-fide* trade and thereby minimise the inconvenience. If, on the other hand, the answer is that we are not entitled to do that, or to attempt to prevent trade through the neutral countries to the enemy, then I must say definitely that if neutral countries were to take that line it is a departure from neutrality. I do not understand that they do take that line. It is quite true that there are things in the last Note from the United States Government which, if we were to concede them, would make it in practice absolutely impossible to prevent goods, even contraband, going wholesale through neutral countries to the enemy. If you were to concede all that was asked in the

last Note of the United States you might just as well give up trying to prevent goods, even contraband goods, going through neutral countries to the enemy, but I do not understand that that is the intention or attitude of the United States Government or of any other Government. After all, I would say this: If there was a war in which a belligerent was entitled to use to the utmost every power, or every fair development of a power which has been exercised by any belligerent in previous wars, and recognised by international law, that applies to our Allies and ourselves in this War. As to the complaints as to our interference with trade, what has Germany done? She has declared arbitrarily a part of the high seas a war zone, and in that zone she has continually sunk merchant vessels without notice or warning, with no precautions for the safety of the crews, sowing it with mines which sink merchant vessels, neutrals as well as belligerents. The sinking of merchant vessels is not confined to belligerents. A neutral vessel is sunk again and again by German submarines without warning, without inquiry as to the nature of its cargo, and without regard even to its destination, because they have been sunk proceeding from one neutral port to another neutral port and not coming to this country at all. In view

of the criticism made to-day upon the action of the British Government and its Allies in interfering with trade, I would ask what would have been said by neutrals if we had done that? What would have been said if, instead of bringing cargoes into our Prize Court, bringing in the ship with the crew perfectly safe, the ship undamaged, the cargo untouched, examining it, and in some cases letting it go forward when satisfied that it is not destined for the enemy, and even in the worst case putting it into our Prize Court, so that if it turns out that we have made a mistake there can be a claim for compensation and the whole of the evidence can be examined—if, instead of doing that, we had sunk neutral vessels without regard to the character of their cargoes and without regard to the safety of the lives of innocent and defenceless crews? [AN HON. MEMBER: “And passengers!”] Well, of course, in regard to passengers, as the House knows, there has been considerable controversy between the United States Government and the enemy Government. They have taken up the point with regard to passengers where their own interests are concerned, but, with regard to the rest, the sinking of even neutral merchant vessels in this way, so far as I know nothing like the kind of protest has been made by neutral Governments that

has been made with regard to some part of our own procedure which we believe to be perfectly justifiable in law, and which is, beyond all doubt, perfectly humane.

I understand that Germany justifies her action of that description by saying that it is retaliation upon us for stopping her food supply. The great case of stopping food supplies which Germany made the starting-ground for her illegal and inhuman policy being the fact that we detained the "Wilhelmina" early last February with foodstuffs to Germany. Was that the first instance of interfering with food supplies destined for the civil population in this War? Before that Germany had sunk two neutral vessels with cargoes of food-stuffs coming to open ports for the civil population of this country. She had requisitioned the food supply of the civil population of Belgium, and I understand that to-day confiscation goes on in the occupied districts of Poland. It was not till a powerful international organisation came into force to relieve the starvation of Belgians, whose food had been requisitioned by Germany in their own country—not till then—that there was any protection for the food of the civil population in the districts occupied by Germany. What right has Germany to complain of measures taken to interfere with her

food supplies when, from the beginning of this War, her armed cruisers, so long as they could keep the seas, sunk neutral merchant vessels with food for the civil population of this country, and in effect treated food where they found it as absolute contraband? That being so, what we say to neutrals is that we are entitled to claim the utmost rights to which we can fairly found a claim upon the recognised practice—practice which we ourselves have recognised—of other belligerents in previous wars.

Let us also bear this in mind. I do not say that we are exercising these measures of blockade the least bit more for our Allies than for ourselves. If we had no Allies I have no doubt that we should have done precisely the same thing, and, as the House says, it is our duty to this country to do it as effectively as possible. But do not let us forget that it is our duty to our Allies as well. We are in this War with Allies, a War forced upon Europe after every effort had been made to find a settlement which could perfectly easily have been found either by conference as we suggested, or by reference to The Hague Tribunal, as the Emperor of Russia suggested. Prussian militarism would not have any other settlement but war. We are now in this War with our

Allies. I say nothing of what the actual conditions of peace will be, because those are things which we must discuss with our Allies and settle in common with them. But the great object to be attained—and, until it is attained, the War must proceed—is that there shall not again be this sort of militarism in Europe, which in time of peace causes the whole of the Continent discomfort by its continual menace, and then, when it thinks the moment has come that suits itself, plunges the Continent into war. The whole of our resources are engaged in the War. Our maximum effort, whether it be military, naval, or financial, is at the disposal of our Allies in carrying on this contest. With them we shall see it through to the end, and we shall slacken no effort. Part of that effort is and must remain—whether it be in the interests of ourselves or of our Allies—in the interests of the great cause, the great transcending cause which unites us all together, which makes us feel that national life will not be safe, that individual life will not be worth living, unless we can achieve successfully the object of this War,—that in that common cause we shall continue to exert all our efforts to put the maximum pressure possible upon the enemy; and part of that pressure must be and continue to be doing the most we can to prevent supplies going to or

from the enemy, using the Navy to its full power, and in common with our Allies sparing nothing, whether it be military, naval, or financial effort, which this country can afford to see the thing through with them to the end.

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